OPERATIONS MEMO

Update from the California Student Aid Commission

August 14, 2014   GOM 2014-25

TO: Financial Aid Administrators

FROM: Catalina G. Mistler
          Chief, Program Administration & Services Division

SUBJECT: **New Cal Grant Leave of Absence Process**

This Operations Memo from the California Student Aid Commission (Commission) announces the implementation of a new Leave of Absence process for the Cal Grant program.

Leave of Absence Process

Last year, Commission staff established a Leave of Absence Advisory Workgroup to review the current Cal Grant leave of absence process as part of the efforts for increasing the utilization rate of the Cal Grant Competitive program. The workgroup agreed to modify the leave of absence lifetime usage and to add an adjustment code that would renew students' Cal Grant awards. These operational changes will allow us to better identify student statuses and to communicate more effectively with students regarding their leave usage and the impact to their Cal Grant award offer.

Based on the advisory workgroup's recommendations, the Commission is implementing the following leave of absence operational changes beginning with the 2014-15 Cal Grant awards:

- Students will be allotted a maximum of 4 semesters/6 quarters (200%) of leave absence throughout the lifetime of their Cal Grant award. This is an increase from the current 150% allowance.

- Students who are enrolled less than half-time (LH) can be reported with the **LH** adjustment reason code, not to exceed 2 semesters/3 quarters (100%) for the duration of the Cal Grant award. Students cannot self-report this status; it must be reported by their institution. The **LH** code will satisfy a term for renewal purposes. **LH** codes posted before the 2014-15 academic year will not count toward the two-semester limit.

- The Commission will continue to utilize the appeal process for extenuating circumstances related to additional leave.

- Beginning with the 2015-16 renewal cycle, all terms must be satisfied by posting a payment, leave of absence, or other transaction code in WebGrants to renew a student's Cal Grant award.

Student Communications

During the 2013-14 academic year, we significantly increased the number of student communications. In 2014-15, we will continue these efforts with Cal Grant offered awardees and paid recipients in an effort to ensure that they understand their Cal Grant award offer. Our goal is to provide all eligible students with the necessary funding to persist through their educational plan and achieve their goals.

Need to contact us?

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